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Tea Burning On Market Square

Greenwich, New Jersey

December 22, 1774

Greenwich Tea Party

"About December 12-14, 1774, the brig "Grayhound," Capt. Allen, came into the Cohansey, with a quantity of tea, said to be shipped at Rotterdam. It is probable that it did not came direct from there, but was a quantity taken from a larger cargo and sent here for a market. It was secretly landed at Greenwich and stored in the cellar of a house standing on Market Square and occupied by Dan Bowen. The inhabitants of Greenwich becoming aware of it, appointed a temporary committee to take care of it, until the County Committee should be chosen.

A general meeting of the inhabitants of the County of Cumberland having been called for the purpose of carrying out the recommendations of the Continental Congress, it was held at Bridgetown on Thursday the 22nd day of December, 1774.

The articles of association entered into by the Continental Congress being publicly read, were unanimously approved; whereupon it was resolved that a committee of thirty-five persons be appointed to carry the same into execution throughout the county.

As soon as the committe was chosen they were publicly informed that a quantity of tea had been secretly landed at Greenwich, and that the inhabitants of that town had taken the alarm and had chosen a temporary committee of five persons to take care of the same until the committee of the county was chosen. The County Committee agreed to meet at ten o'clock the next morning in order to take care of the tea.

Accordingly they met the next day and found to their surprise that the tea had been destroyed by persons unknown the night before.

Rev. Philip Vickers Fithian, who resided at Greenwich and who is said to have been one of the party who destroyed the tea, gives us, in a few words recorded in his journal on the next day after the occurrence a vivid picture of the affair and the feelings of the people concerning it. Under date of "Friday 23" he says, "Last night the tea was, by a number of persons in disguise, taken out of the house and consumed with fire. Violent and different are the words about this uncommon maneuver among the inhabitants. Some rave, some curse and condemn, some try to reason; many are glad the tea is destroyed, but almost all disapprove the manner of the destruction."

Two of the committee, including the clerk, are said to have been of the number who burned the tea. Disguised as Indians, the party, early in the evening, broke open the storehouse, took out the boxes of tea and burned them on the open square.

Cumberland County may well be proud of the fact that upon her soil and among her citizens were found those who dared defy the powers of the British government and to express in this bold way their determination to resist oppression, even to an armed resistance, if necessary. A monument was erected by the state in 1908 upon the site of the tea burning.

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THIS ARTICLE TAKEN FROM THE HISTORY OF GLOUCESTER, SALEM AND CUMBERLAND COUNTIES, NEW JERSEY, BY SHEPPARD AND CUSHING.